

Volero, Victor.

The Profane History of Louisiana

**From Bienville
to Huey P. Long**

Featuring the Evolution of
Vice from the First Days of
the City and Speculations
of John Law to the Basin
Street Dive of Lulu White
and Intricate Ramifications
of the Modern Underworld

**An Epitomized History
Showing the Reasons why
New Orleans was called
"The City Care Forgot"**

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UNITED STATES, CANADA, GREAT BRITAIN

By Victor Volero

HOW HUEY LONG TOOK UP
THE WORK WHERE
BIENVILLE
STARTED



AND WHAT HAPPENED IN BETWEEN:

The Casquette Girls . . . Lafitte the Pirate . . .
The Voodoo Rites . . . Slave Trading . . . The
Birth of the Underworld . . . Bloody O'Reilly,
the Butcher of the Underworld . . . The
Louisiana Lottery . . . The Mississippi Bubble
. . . How the Police Stepped in . . . The Pay-
Off Racket . . . The Final Crash . . . How Huey
Long Smashed Corruption and Put the Lid on
the Most Vicious Vice Ring in America. . . .

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FOREWORD

Those who read while they run will find this a compact, concise and clear presentation of the history of Louisiana.

It is amazing, audacious and accurate as well as sensational and intensely interesting, but each word is true and based on facts which may be easily verified.

This is more than a brief history. It is dissection of a disease, the symptoms of which may be found in any large American city and can only be cured and permanently corrected except by the master hand of a super surgeon in the person of a fearless, dauntless and daring statesman who disregards all personal danger and spurns all thought of personal gain and aggrandizement.

The cancer in the heart of civic New Orleans is the same dread demon which is eating out the vitals of all our great American metropolitan centers.... It is this cancerous and lecherous condition which is the problem confronting the country.... To wipe it out, with all its tentacles, is the chief concern of every citizen.

After reading this abbreviated history, *The Profane History of Louisiana*, you will know your cities are suffering from a disease that is almost incurable and you will want to lend every effort to the champion of democracy who is giving his life to save the lives and liberties of the great people of the United States.

Lulu White's Basin Street Dive

I

*"in fourteen hundred ninety-two
a dago from ee tal a ya
was walking down the streets of spain
a sellin' hot ta mal ya*

*he went up to the queen of spain
said: "if you give me ship and cargo
i'll be a lying son of a seacock
if i don't bring back chicago."*

CHORUS.

In loud and wine-soaked notes the star entertainer at Lulu White's, now the haunt of the "old ring," regaled a crowd of midnight revelers, browsing in the bowels of the old New Orleans redlight district, with the tale of America in ribald song while he hammered with syncopated rhythm on the brand new baby grand which had caught the madame's fancy during the day.

Lulu White, herself, beaming with the joy that only four quarts of imported champagne and a \$1000 night could give to her sophisticated nerves, was standing in the center of the diminutive ballroom, with its full length mirrors, shaking her body like a quivering mass of jelly, clapping her hands and shouting: "Come on girls, come on girls, hurry up, hurry up, get ready for the circus, get ready for the circus."

Lulu, though black as pitch, with gleaming white teeth, and weighing close to three hundred pounds, always had a white male lover. The current entrepreneur to her ebony heart and diamond encrusted digits, was the virtuoso historian who was now battering away at the tuneful history which lead to the discovery of tobacco, gin and debauchery.

It was at the turn of the century that the bucksome negress, serving as a room maid, saved enough from the generous tips, tossed to her by the "girls in the house," to take over the dive on Basin street, after the landlady made a hasty exit to South America following a very mysterious murder which shook the very foundations of the "ring" and threatened for a time to close the infamous district, known to polite folks as "Storyville."

Some say that the sensational murder took place in the Basin street house and before the eyes of the ever smiling Lulu, and thy further declare that it was due to her firm reluctance to relate any of the details that she received the support and protection which made it possible for this otherwise ignorant negro girl, who could neither read nor write, to operate without intereference and within a few years amass a fortune in catering to the whims, impulses and passions of the gay young dogs who patronized not only Lulu's girls, both octoroon and white, but also her notorious midnight "circus."

This "circus" will forever be remembered in the profane history of the city as the symbol of its extreme degradation, profligacy and corruption. Even the quadroon balls, which the gay blades patronized before the Civil War, could not afford a contrast in utter abandon to the very lowest forms of sensuality exhibited at Lulu White's midnight performances. Only the World War and the entire force of official Washington was able to put a stop to the "circus" and the other low dives, which had flourished for decades within a stone's throw of the New Orleans business district and only a few blocks to the central police headquarters, where the annual take in graft was said to be not less than \$1,500,000 a year.

After the World War a reform administration, with an honest mayor, kept the lid on the city until 1924, when again the "old ring" rose to power and re-opened the vicious vice dens, the gambling houses, the lottery shops and exacted tribute from every phase of unlicensed and outlaw business, including the speakeasy, which institution had risen during the hectic days of prohibition. The graft doubled the pre-war figure and officialdom waxed rich—life became a mad merry-go-round of dissipation and depravity for the "old ring."

Finally, a new figure leaped to power, a political genius and master statesman. He defeated the "old ring" candidate for governor, he won a decisive victory over the "old ring" candidate for the United States senate, and, at last, after entrenching himself in power and making his position impregnable, he challenged, single-handed, those vicious forces of vice, which because of years of illicit gain had dominated the very city with the same audacity and boldness displayed by their fore-runners, the old Louisiana lottery crowd which had been ousted in 1893 after twenty-five years of unimpeded revenues totalling in net profits one million dollars a month from the sale of 100,000 lottery

tickets which yielded \$2,000,000 gross every month, twelve months a year, or a total gross income amounting to the colossal sum of more than \$250,000,000 for the twenty-five-year period, out of which they paid the state of Louisiana a franchise tax of only \$50,000 a year.

Only the combined moral force of the entire United States backed up by official protests from foreign countries succeeded in ousting the octopus of the old Louisiana lottery crowd which for a quarter of a century dominated newspapers and the original "old ring." But, it only required the radio warning, a single speech, from *United States Senator Huey P. Long* to cause the several thousand denizens of the New Orleans vice world to close their doors.

"Take warning, take warning," he exclaimed over the microphone. And, without an overt act, with not a word of comment, the vice kings, took warning.

They knew that *Huey Long* meant what he said when he told them to close; and, with their closing, the final chapter of the profane history of New Orleans has been enacted and all that is left to be done now is to tell the story so that the world may know that the average law-abiding citizen has a new champion, that law can be enforced, and that one honest man can triumph over a regiment of renegades and racketeers.

* * *

In our efforts to keep in step with the present we lose sight of the past; and, the future, which should be quite simple, assumes a bewildering complexity which becomes as meaningless as the constant tomtom of a jungle drum.

The flight of a Lindbergh resolves itself into an emotion and its significance as the beginning of an epoch is obscured in its relationship to human progress. But the enthusiasm which swept the world when the Lone Eagle landed in Paris, and the spirit of invincibility and wild speculation which followed, was no greater than the wide acclaim and new vision with which the populace of Spain and other countries of Europe greeted the announcement that Columbus had discovered a New World.

That event, five centuries ago, is given little thought today. Few persons remember the exact date, when fate decreed that the Dark Ages, which had held the Old World stagnant for a thousand years, should end with the discovery of a virgin soil by the great-hearted and patient explorer from Genoa.

And, now, after nearly five hundred years only a handful of archeologists know that cycles of civilization, like the rising and setting of the sun, had a day in America.

There are records of the Mayas, which indicate an existence of these strange peoples dating back more than 300,000 years before the arrival of Columbus. They had reached a state of culture in which all the populace lived in palaces at their capital city. The Spanish conquistadores, who followed Columbus, found great structures of stone and stucco, each connected with communicating causeways and housing thousands of Mayas, the entire city built over a lake, possessing a labyrinthian beauty not unlike modern-day Venice, when they marched to central Mexico and captured the trusting and peace-loving Montezuma.

The coming of the conquerors had been foretold, according to the Maya manuscripts, even to the hour and day, such was the understanding of time and events. For centuries the Mayan mind knew that the white-bearded gods would come from the sea and take over their country.

To look backwards over the ages of the past and follow the march of humanity to its present state of development; and, then, to peer ahead into the future and analyze the problem of the present in an effort to determine the consequent effect on posterity, is the province of both history and philosophy. This work does not aim at either distinction. The sole purpose is to present in a clear and simple fashion, the story of Louisiana, which is also the story of New Orleans, from the earliest records until the present generation of great leaders, colorful characters and stupendous achievements. For, regardless of those who bemoan "the happy old days," the present far outshines the past.

It is today that the dreams of yesterday are being materialized. The age-old menace of a seemingly unconquerable mighty river, the impassable mud roads, the ancient cobbled streets, the antiquated institutions and super-annuated systems, have all given way to the leadership of Twentieth-Century Louisiana.

It is a story of courage, of self-sacrifice and of faultless faith, guided by sound vision and an unselfish spirit of humanitarian service, forming a foundation and leaving a record which sets a standard for each generation of men and women who give their lives to Louisiana, and its great city, New Orleans.

II

Louis The Grand

Louisiana was named after King Louis XIV by LaSalle in 1682.

King Louis, surnamed the Great, ascended the throne of France in his 5th year, under the regency of his mother, Anne of Austria, who selected Cardinal Mazarin as her minister, an artful Italian, whose avarice made him odious to the people.

He neglected the education of the young king who was trained only in dancing, fencing and other superficialities, but despite this subtle scheme to suppress him Louis became one of the great rulers of French history. His reign continued for seventy-three years, the longest on record. He died in 1715 at the advanced age of seventy-eight. Louis built the Palace of Versailles. He was one of the most handsome men in France. He encouraged literature and the other arts and sciences, but sacrificed the real interests of his people to gratify his love of sensual pleasure and self-glory. Like most kings he was rather debauched and a bad moral example to his people.

Since the discovery of Columbus in 1492, ten kings sat on the throne of France: Charles VIII, Louis XII, Francis I, Henry II, Francis II, Charles IX, Henry III, Henry IV, Louis XIII, Louis XIV.

In that time the leading French explorers were: Joliet and Marquette, and LaSalle and Tonti.

During the same period a number of Spanish explorers also visited the region of Louisiana, including Pamfiro Narvaez, DeVaca and DeSoto.

Narvaez was among the followers of Columbus.

DeSoto made a huge fortune with Pizarro in the Spanish conquest of the Aztec in Peru. With his wealth he outfitted eleven vessels. His force included 1,000 infantry and 350 cavalry. With this army he sailed for Florida, the Bay of Santa Spiritu, expecting to find and conquer another country like Peru.

He landed May 31, 1539, and marched through territory now comprising the states of Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

At the site of the present city of Mobile he found an Indian town named Mauvila. He captured this place after an heroic resistance on the part of the Indians.

He then wandered through Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.

After two years of wandering and the loss of hundreds of men, he finally crossed the great river, later called the Mississippi, at a point near the site of the city of Memphis.

More hardship followed and he at last reached the Red River, so named after the deep hue given the water by its red clay bottom. Reaching the mouth, where it emptied into the Mississippi, DeSoto became ill with fever and died May 15, 1542.

His companions hollowed out the trunk of an oak tree for a coffin and at midnight placed the remains in the river so that the Indians would not know DeSoto had died.

The burial took place opposite the site of the present city of St. Helena.

The three hundred survivors built rafts and floated down the Mississippi and made their way back to Florida and thence Cuba and Spain.

DeSoto's last words were: "Union and perseverance, my friends! So long as the breath of life animates your bodies, do not falter in the enterprise which you have undertaken."

It was during the same year of DeSoto's death that Louis XIV succeeded his father Louis XIII, to the crown of France. Louis was then only five years old.

In the meantime the French crown encouraged the colonization and exploration of America, especially in Canada where forts and settlements had already been underway.

When Louis XIV was twenty-one, after reigning under a regent for sixteen years, Cardinal Mazarin died, and Louis himself took over the direction of his kingdom.

It was at this time, in 1673, that two French Canadians, Father Marquette, a pious monk, and Joliet, an enterprising fur trader, left Quebec, Canada, and made their way down the St. Lawrence River, through Lake Ontario up Niagara River, through Lake Erie, by St. Clair River to Lake Huron, by Mackinaw Strait, to and through Fox River to Wisconsin River, down which they proceeded to the Mis-

issippi. They followed the great river in their canoe to the mouth of the Arkansas and made friends with the Indians by the use of a fancy calumet or pipe of peace presented to Pere Marquette by tribes in the Great Lakes region.

At the Arkansas, the Indians told them of the course of the river to the Gulf and advised them not to hazard the rest of the trip as the explorers would be compelled to pass through the territory of strong and hostile tribes. So, the two Frenchmen returned to Quebec and related their experiences and observations. Both declared in their records that the Mississippi would eventually carry the commerce of a vast and fertile valley.

In 1682, seven years after Marquette and Joliet had returned, LaSalle left the same place, Quebec, with a party of explorers.

With his men LaSalle reached the Mississippi February 2, 1682, after following the Illinois River from Lake Michigan.

Two months later, April 7, 1682, he reached the mouth of the Mississippi, after following its course the entire distance for about 1,200 miles during which he passed through many Indian villages.

Reaching the mouth of the river, he took possession of the entire territory drained by the Mississippi and its tributaries for the crown of France and with appropriate ceremonies, both religious and civil, named the new land Louisiana.

After a brief stay LaSalle made his way back up the river and thence to Quebec.

Two years later, July 24, 1684, with a fleet of four vessels given him by King Louis the Grand, now in his 45th year, LaSalle endeavored to reach the mouth of the Mississippi by way of the sea. He planned to erect a chain of fur trading posts, linking the Gulf coast with the Great Lakes and Canada.

His navigators missed the mouth of the river and the small army of explorers landed at Matagorda Bay, in the present state of Texas.

His force reduced by disease and abandoned by others who preferred life with the savages, LaSalle wandered for three years through Texas trying to find the mouth of the Mississippi.

Finally, at a point near the Trinity River and the present town of Washington, Texas, a few of his men turned on him and murdered the great LaSalle. This terrible tragedy took place during March, 1687.

LaSalle was a gallant explorer. His death was a great loss to the progress of exploration and settlement in Louisiana.

With LaSalle on his first trip was the intrepid Tonti, an Italian officer, who served with honor in Sicily, where he lost a hand in combat. As a substitute he fashioned an iron hand which he used instead of a weapon.

He remained among the Indians when LaSalle returned to Quebec the first time. LaSalle was to meet him on his return at the mouth of the river. But LaSalle never found the river in his return by way of the sea.

Tonti waited and while he lingered among the Indian tribes he learned their dialects and won many wives. He taught them many useful things and all the Indians loved him as a friend. They called him Chief "Iron hand."

Tonti waited for nineteen years. He did not learn of LaSalle's fate until he met the LeMoyne expedition. It was then too late to avenge the crime.

Tonti was undoubtedly the first American soldier of fortune. He rises like a genii of romance in the history of the past, an unsung hero, one of the fantastic figures of early Louisiana.

The LeMoyne expedition headed by three brothers of Canadian birth, Iberville, Sauvelle and Bienville tried the futile plan of LaSalle and succeeded. They made their way by sea to the mouth of the Mississippi, March 1699.

First they landed at a small island east of the mouth of the river. Here they found a large number of strange animals which looked like cats, so they called the place Cat Island, the animals were really possums or raccoons.

They ascended the river as far as the Red River and then returned down stream as far as Bayou Manchac. At this point Iberville turned East through the bayou to several lakes, which he named Maurepas, Pontchartrain and Borgne, the first two after French officials and the last to signify that it was not entirely surrounded by land.

From Lake Borgne he entered a beautiful bay which he named Bay St. Louis after King Louis IX, known in history as Saint Louis.

Overlooking this bay Iberville established his capital and called it Biloxi after a tribe of Indians he found on the site.

Meanwhile Bienville continued on down the river to meet the vessels of the small expedition which were anchored near the mouth.

On the way he stopped on a slight rise of ground which formed a crescent in the river. He found a tribe of Indians and a village called Tchoutchouma. He looked the place over as a potential site for a city and capitol. While here he noticed the broad white sails of a British brig making headway upstream. As the brig tacked to clear a wide bend in the stream there was a brief calm and Bienville paddling furiously in his canoe demanded that the ship turn and leave the river.

Captain Bar in command of the vessel demanded to know upon what grounds the youthful Bienville, only nineteen, made his demand.

"By right of prior discovery and the fact that this is a dependency of Canada and ruled by the French crown," Bienville replied with fiery determination.

Much to Bienville's surprise the English brig turned and went downstream.

The point of the brief controversy is called: "English Turn."

What a momentous moment, a tiny canoe with one man, pitted against a big brig with complete crew. For once the lion faced a mouse, and lost.

Returning to the Gulf Bienville joined the fleet and his two brothers Iberville and Sauvelle.

Iberville left almost immediately for a trip of exploration as far as Natchez and then returned to France. He left Sauvelle in command.

A short time later Sauvelle died and Bienville automatically became acting Governor of Louisiana.

When Bienville first camped on the site of the present city of New Orleans, he urged that it be selected for the capital of Louisiana, but his brothers insisted on Biloxi, where the capital remained for twenty years.

In Montreal, where they were born and reared with the other members of the LeMoyne family, which included eleven sons and three daughters, the heavy hardships caused

early maturity and the other members of the expedition felt no concern when the responsibility of governing the colony fell on the shoulders of the young Bienville, who at the tender age of twenty became the first active governor of the vast territory of Louisiana.

In the retrospect of historical study it is obvious that Bienville may well be called the Father of Louisiana, while the honor of being the founder and builder of its modern progress rightfully belongs to the young governor, Huey P. Long, who ascended to the governorship in 1928 and sponsored all the major improvements, which during the last several years have made Louisiana one of the most progressive in the Union.

He literally lifted the state out of the mud on to cement; eliminated illiteracy with increased facilities and free school books; built bridges free of toll; rehoused the state departments and public institutions in new buildings; brought about needful tax reforms, shifting the burden from the poor to the rich; and, wound up by putting the lid on the most vicious vice ring in America.

III

White Men Take Indian Squaws

It required eighteen years for Bienville to convince the officials of France that the ridge between the river and the lake, the turn that formed a crescent about 100 miles from the Gulf, was the ideal location for the capital of Louisiana. When authority was finally granted he sent his engineers and three score artisans and assistants to the marshy ground and ordered them to lay out and survey the streets, sidewalks and building lots for the new city, which he said was to be the city of destiny, the Paris of the new world. So they called it New Orleans after the Duc d'Orleans and Bienville's engineer Prager, had the workmen chop down the cypress and palmetto, fill in the holes, raise a levee and dig drainage canals, until he had cleared up a section of land, which formed an oblong square fronting on the river, and which the Choctaws, the Chickasaws and other tribes of Indians, who used to come to the site to fish and dance, looked upon with open wonder and with some bewilderment.

"Humpf," exclaimed the chief of the Choctaws, "white man take Indian land."

"Awrf," replied the Chickasaw chief, "soon take Indian squaw."

It was a bitter day for the Indians. For two centuries the Spanish were pushing their settlements from Mexico and west from California. For a century the British had been pushing from the East. For half a century France had been pushing down from the North, and now, here was the white man, usurping the last stamping ground of the red-man, the great Mississippi and its abundantly fertile valley.

In their poetic natures these natural chiefs knew that the time had come for their swan-song. In another century their land would soon be over-run with white men of every nation, as numerous as the red tribes which for innumerable centuries had lived from the bountiful endowments of this virgin and unspoiled territory.

So the white men followed the Indian paths, the buffalo trails, and turned them into wagon roads, then highways and railways, where now buses and autos and long passenger and freight trains carry the victuals for the vital needs and comforts of the new civilization.

Slowly at first the new site grew, from a few hundred after the first year, until gradually it reached close to 5,000 eighty years later, in 1800, three years before the transfer.

In the meantime, the Old World did its best to give the new town a helping hand.

They sent over shiploads of unemployed, surplus from the slums of Paris, many of whom were criminals, gamblers and vicious characters.

Bienville sent numerous complaints, declaring that the type of men they sent from France were "shiftless, lazy, dissolute, spending their time in drinking, gambling at cards and running in the woods after the Indian maids."

In another despatch he said "we need white women as wives for these men who now run after the Indian women."

So, a few months later, (they had no radio, cables, nor telegraph, two hundred years ago), a shipload of women arrived from the homeland. They were mostly demimondes, women from the streets and the houses of correction. They made fitting mates for the rascals who made merry and lived on the relief of the government.

The crown of France eventually threw up its hands in disgust. As a result the entire Louisiana territory with its millions of acres of rich soil was turned over to Crozat, a great financier, in exchange for past favors to the crown; and after squandering his millions of francs on the hopeless problem he relinquished his rights and it was then placed in the hands of the fore-runner of our modern market manipulators, the man who invented frenzied finance—a Scotchman named John Law.

John Law conceived the idea of paper currency, what is now known as the green-back. He also devised the instrument of finance now known as the stock certificate.

Although a gambler and a master at manipulation, John Law in the light of history must be looked upon as a great genius of finance and not as a crook. There is no evidence to prove that he ever cheated or stole anything. However, he died bankrupt and broken-hearted, after his enemies had succeeded in displacing him from the position of power to which he had been elevated by the regent of the crown, for John Law was head of the Bank of France and controlled the entire financial structure of the French government.

With this power he sought to make Louisiana a garden spot, a paradise for the surplus populations of France and the Old World.

He was a master of publicity and propaganda. Through his inspiration the best writers and artists of France drew up folders, pamphlets, circulars and many different dodgers, showing the vast wealth and the unlimited opportunities of the new territory.

He formed a great stock company and issued millions of shares and soon these certificates began to rise in market price as one speculator after another became active in buying and selling the issues.

Not satisfied with the progress of his plans, John Law had the government issue paper money, fiat currency, in payment of government obligations and to liquidate government debts. His theory was, and some day it will be recognized as a true principle of governmental finance, that a country is no greater than its credit. He contended that paper currency could be issued in unlimited amounts as long as the government credit sustained its purchasing power.

Thus with millions, or rather billions of fiat money, he paid the debts of the crown, put money into circulation and so inflated the currency that everyone seemed to have money and everyone seemed to be speculating in the certificates of the company which John Law formed to operate the territory of Louisiana.

It was the first stock market, there in the streets in Paris, where overnight men and women of moderate means became personages of wealth and indulged in every luxury. The prices of the shares soared to new high levels with the dawn of each day and the distribution of more tons of descriptive literature and propaganda about the inexhaustible wealth of Louisiana.

John Law was the man of the hour, the uncrowned king of France, the new star in an old world which was just beginning to learn the art, but not the science, of speculation.

The star had infallible faith in his destiny. He saw no limit to his scheme of printing billions of currency and issuing millions of certificates. He contended that money was the medium of exchange and that the activity of business depended primarily on having an abundant supply of the medium.

Those without work were given government jobs and paid with paper currency with which they bought Louisiana certificates and became rich as the shares constantly rose in value. It was a simple formula!

Extraordinary inducements were offered settlers. They were guaranteed a livelihood and provided with transportation to New Orleans.

Ship after ship sailed to the new capital with pioneers seeking a new start and a land of easy existence.

Again the men needed wives, but this time, owing to the improved character of the colonists, the crown selected from the convents and orphanages young girls and women of virtue. They were called "les filles cassettes,"—casket girls—because the crown gave each a little casket as a hope chest in which they placed their trousseau and other little trinkets. As they stepped ashore at the levee in New Orleans, they each carried the little casket, which was the king's dowry.

The good nuns of the Ursuline convent met them and chaperoned them until they were chosen as brides by the men who preferred white girls to squaws. It did not take long to dispose of each boatload of these young women, who like the picture brides of the Orient, never knew their husbands until shortly before being led to the altar. It was a case of "love at first sight or no love at all."

Perhaps it was tragic, but from all accounts most of these minute-matches were successful and the best blood of the leading families flowed from the veins of these innocent young ladies taken in wedlock by the more sturdy and serious-minded of the first colonists.

The other element, those who preferred the squaws, continued to gamble and dissipate. So from its very beginning the lines of demarcation began to divide the population between those who felt their responsibilities and those who were irresponsible. The former engaged themselves in various pursuits, opened small shops, entered trades, cleared nearby land for gardens of vegetables and eventually became self-supporting. The more ambitious went further from the limits of the city and cleared large tracts and planted corn, sugar cane, myrtle, tobacco and grain.

The irresponsible element avoided such arduous tasks which compelled them to exercise the arts of industry and gain their livelihood by the energy of manual labor. They opened saloons, gambling houses and places of prostitution,

which they conducted with a nerve and effrontery startling even for that early day. But the earnest workers were too busy to pay much attention or to heed the curse being brought upon the growing city and the effects the activities of the vicious elements would have upon the morals and character of posterity. What regard had the vicious for the generations of the future. As a rule they were unmarried and childless.

Suddenly the bubble burst. The shares of John Law which had reached fabulous heights became worthless. The world of finance was not ready yet to understand the principle of currency credit. Overnight, the masses who had risen to heights of affluence were hurled into financial oblivion. The debacle was worse than the Wall Street crash of 1929; yes, ten times worse. There was no recovery. For generations the people of France remained in depression. It was really not until the successive victories of the great Napoleon that France as a nation recovered its morale, from the crushing effects of the crash a century before.

The industrious and thrifty pioneers of Louisiana did not feel the depression as keenly as the speculators of Paris. They had not speculated. They were too many months removed from the financial center of Paris. Instead they improved and very often rebuilt their dwellings and stores, expanded their fields, planted more myrtle which supplied the wax for candles (there was no petroleum or gas wells then), and increased their production of indigo, which supplied the world with dye for clothing and other fabrics. The earnest and energetic became affluent, while the profligate continued their wayward way, opening the first cabarets in America, the first public dance places, the first real gambling dives, and the first professional brothels.

Bienville fought against the growth in vice, but he had little support. The church people were too busy praying and the constructive citizens were too busy acquiring wealth and establishing estates.

The young governor sought to stem the tide of sin by restrictions. First, he tried to enforce a curfew ordinance, compelling everyone but the night-watch to be in bed by nine at night. Then he put a heavy tax on liquor and places of pleasure. But the adventurous young population wanted excitement and they found it

in the first "blind tigers," "speak-easies," and "good-time houses."

The first "goodtime" houses offered a choice of Indian squaws. But in a few years, with the increase in the number of slaves, colored prostitutes became more common than their copper-skinned sisters, especially after the massacre of the whites at Natchez and other new settlements in the territory contiguous to New Orleans. The savage braves endured everything but the taking of their squaws.

Abuse of the negroes became so pronounced that Bienville issued his famous "Black Code," which proclamation outlined in detail the manner in which slave-owners should discipline and manage their slaves.

So thus we see how the vicious element has prostituted first the Indian and then the Negro, demoralized the subnormal of our cities, and profaned the history, not only of Louisiana but the entire nation.

IV

Cradle of Liberty

Despite the demoralizing influence of the vicious, New Orleans and the vast territory of Louisiana made progress. There were floods, famines and pestilences, but the better element faced every vicissitude and succeeded in overcoming all obstacles. Finally, the crown of France, fearing the loss of the territory to England, transferred Louisiana to the other Bourbon crown of Spain, in the secret treaty of 1762, forty-five years after the selection of New Orleans as the capital of the colony.

One can imagine the consternation of the French-blooded population, when details of the secret pact eventually became known. The horror of the situation inflamed the impetuous spirits of the outstanding families. As a result, the first revolt, the first republic, the first step toward free government, the first blow against the oppression of the Old World and its autocracy, was struck by the Frenchmen of New Orleans.

This was nearly a decade before the Boston Tea Party. So New Orleans has rightful claims to the distinction of being the cradle of American liberty.

The first Spanish governor arrived from Havana, then under the dominion of Spain, as was all of Latin-America. His name was Ulloa, very euphonious and quite effeminate. As the brig which carried him nosed into the soft-mud levee in front of the city's square, called the Place d'Armes, he was met by the entire force of the town, then about 3,000 whites, and told to return to where he came from, as the Frenchmen of New Orleans were fully capable of governing themselves, as well as the entire territory of Louisiana.

Ulloa being a man of some wisdom immediately perceived the situation and ordered the crew of the brig to depart without delay. But he did not return immediately to Havana. He had a tryst to keep with his fiance, a Spanish beauty from Peru. She was to meet him in New Orleans and there become the bride of the first Spanish governor of the vast new land of the valley which had fallen under the iron hand of Spain. Because of the lack of communication facilities and the slowness

of ocean travel, Ulloa waited for nearly a year. For fear of missing her, he established himself in a rendezvous at the mouth of the river, at a place called Belize, about one hundred miles south of New Orleans. Here he remained unmolested by the French colonists, who were now governing themselves, until the beautiful Peruvian belle arrived. The Spanish official with his prized beauty then made his way to Havana, where he met the emissary of the Spanish king, one who became known in the annals of Louisiana history as "Bloody" O'Reilly.

This sobriquet resulted from the cruelty displayed by O'Reilly in his treatment of the leaders of the French revolt and the subsequent oppression of the French residents and merchants.

O'Reilly with a dozen ships and more than 4,000 picked troops sailed from Havana and landed in New Orleans in 1769. He sent word on ahead that "all was forgiven," provided there would be no opposition to his taking over the government. So the night he landed he gave a brilliant banquet in the government house to which he invited all the leading families, especially the leaders of the revolt. After the banquet was over, in answer to the enthusiastic cries for a "speech from the new governor," he arose and ordered the arrest of a score of leading citizens whose names he called out with no more emotion than a schoolboy calling a roll call.

The banquet chamber became a scene of distress. The wives of the leaders clung to them with arms around their neck, weeping bitterly. Everyone sensed the tragedy which was about to ensue.

After his announcement O'Reilly then in the same casual manner, with a voice cold with the terrible message it bore, declared that six of the leaders, the highest officials in the French colonial government, were to be executed at dawn.

It was a summary sentence which reminded one of the present day justice meted out to rivals by Hitler in Germany.

Promptly at dawn, these martyrs of liberty, were marched to the parade ground, where O'Reilly personally supervised their execution.

For his diversion and tyrannical delight he ordered two of them shot. The next two he ordered on to the

gallows, where they were strangled to death. The last two he had placed on the wheel, a contrivance dragged by a squad of soldiers. These two, with pleas of agony, asking their persecutors to shoot them instead, were rolled around the parade ground on the heavy wheel until every bone in their bodies was broken and their flesh crushed to a pulp until the last flicker of life, of nerve reaction, was extinct.

After this spectacle "Bloody" O'Reilly with his staff went to the governor's mansion, which he now occupied, and had breakfast.

The other prisoners were sent to Morro Castle prison in Havana, where one by one, within a few months, they died in the damp, dark cells of that cesspool of iniquity.

Under the Spanish regime the vice of New Orleans became more vicious. Hundreds of Spanish adventurers poured into the territory seeking easy ways to wealth and power. The colony soon represented two extremes of society, the very ascetic and the very vicious.

Even an attempt was made to introduce the Spanish inquisition as a means of espionage and persecution.

O'Reilly, after a few months, craving the more luxurious life of the court of Spain and taking everything of value that was transportable, left the colony. It was with a silent prayer on every French tongue that they bid the Spanish general adieu.

For sheer cruelty he out-Neroed Nero. He had been born in Ireland, of Irish parentage. As a boy he ran away to sea and landed in Spain, where he later joined the Spanish army and in an encounter saved the life of the king who immediately elevated him to the rank of a general and showered him with wealth and favors.

Thus lifted to sudden power and riches the poor Irish lad lost his head and swollen with his own importance became dominant, dictatorial, cruel and tyrannical—an evolution too often evidenced in history by individuals under similar circumstances, whether political, military, social or financial.

The succession of Spanish governors that followed made a fortress of the capital, built a huge wall around it and a deep ditch on the outer side, in order to repel the invasion of any enemy. A canal was also dug with

slave labor. It lead to the lake and its digging stirred up the swamps and the yellow mosquito causing fever and epidemic.

In later years hundreds of skeletons of slaves were found in ditches along the canal. Their discovery caused another pestilential epidemic to sweep the city causing the loss of many Spanish lives, a slight retribution for the cruelties of O'Reilly.

A conflagration also added to the woes of the Spanish rulers. The fire raged for three days and the flames ate away three-fourths of the city, causing millions of dollars in losses to the Spanish.

Ten years later, in 1803, the crown of Spain found little reluctance in transferring the entire territory back to France, and without delay Napoleon, then at the heighth of power, sold the entire territory to the United States for the trifling sum of \$15,000,000.

The population of New Orleans was then (1803) a little more than 5,000 persons, including French, Spanish, slaves, Indians and a few Americans.

Within the next ten years the population doubled. It was like the gold rush in California a half century later. The pioneers and adventurers flocked to the city. There was little if any employment to welcome them. So they took to gambling, vice and living by their wits. Some, of course, went to the land, which welcomed all with open arms to its broad acres; to till and take title to for a pittance.

These hardy spirits prospered and eventually became the planters of huge stretches of sugar cane, corn, cotton, tobacco and rice, and the masters of hundreds of ebony-hued slaves imported direct from the jungles of Africa.

On Sundays the slaves with a respite from their labors danced the bamboula in Congo Square, just outside the old walls of the city. With hide stretched over a barrel for a tom-tom they pounded out their syncopated jungle rhythms and introduced those fantastic steps and movements which later evolved into the present jazz dance.

After a time curious whites crowded around the square and soon the vicious element joined in the dance.

It was not long before the innocent pastime of the timid native Africans became an orgy which necessitated its discontinuance by the authorities.

About this time, smuggling became quite profitable, for under the terms of the new territorial law administered by the American governor Claiborne, the importing of slaves was strictly prohibited.

As the demand for slaves became more insistent, (white labor would not perform the arduous tasks of the plantations), the contraband became more valuable. The bolder members of the element which lived by its wits entered the trade of smuggling slaves to the plantations. There were many different groups or gangs. They smuggled the slaves in by means of small luggers from the big slave boats which anchored in the gulf. These boats were mostly Spanish.

In New Orleans were two brothers, Pierre and Jean Lafitte, from Bordeaux, France, who opened a small blacksmith shop on Bourbon and St. Philip streets. They were likable fellows and after the long, hot day at the forge they found pleasure in sitting at the round-topped tables in the wine shops. Their gracious ways and generous treating won many friends, especially among the smugglers. As their acquaintance spread the Lafittes became agents for the smugglers and their blacksmith shop became the headquarters for the slave trade, for the plantation-owners stopping at the shop to have their horses shod, also talked of their needs to the blacksmith brothers. The result was that nearly every black cargo brought to New Orleans soon passed through the hands of the Lafittes.

As time passed they grew in wealth and acquired control of the entire trade. They established a receiving station on an island at the entrance to Barataria Bay and there at different intervals they sojourned with their friends in wild carousals and utter abandon. Their power grew with their capital. At the peak of their affluence they had more than fifty ships and hundreds of retainers in their crews. They were like Capone of the present time. And like the famous Chicago gang leader they finally landed in prison.

During their incarceration the British fleet with the great general Pakenham, arrived in the Gulf of Mexico for the express purpose of capturing New Orleans. Their

idea was to capture the city before Christmas and give it as a present to the king of England.

This was in the month of December in the year 1814.

Well, their plans were frustrated, for just before Christmas one of the Lafitte brothers escaped. It was Jean. He was sent for by the admiral of the fleet and offered for his services and those of his five hundred men, a captaincy in the navy and one hundred pounds for each one of his men. Lafitte was to use his men and boats to transport the British troops from the large schooners in the gulf, up the winding bayous which lead through the swamps to the city. In other words, to smuggle in the army, like he did the slaves.

As soon as the conferences were over Lafitte made his way to Barataria, where he said he needed several days to organize his men and get his boats in condition. The British leaders agreed. They were patient. They said they would wait until he was ready. They pointed out that it was best to delay a week, two weeks, three weeks, if necessary, rather than spoil the chances for complete success.

Instead of lingering at his Barataria headquarters Lafitte ordered his men to prepare themselves to leave on a moment's notice for New Orleans. In the meantime he hurried to the city and gained an audience with General Andrew Jackson, who had hastened from Mobile to defend the city.

Lafitte told Jackson the plans of the British and the fiery general rushed his own plans for the defense of the city.

Each day the British waited for Lafitte, meant another respite for Jackson in his feverish activities of recruiting men and materials for the trenches which he stretched across the lower section of the city from river to swamps. The heterogeneous array of fighting men from Kentucky rifles to Lafitte's best gunners stemmed the tide of the redcoats when they finally after three weeks' delay (January 8, 1815), marched in unbroken ranks, file upon file, on the hastily constructed trenches which was the main line of defense thrown up by Jackson.

As line after line assaulted the raw recruits there was a blast of fire which mowed down the British columns like waves of wheat before the lash of a hurricane.

The brave Pakenham, leading his troops, was among the first to fall. Hundreds were killed and many others wounded. It was indeed a field of blood. The result was a complete victory for Jackson. He was the hero of the hour. But he did not forget Lafitte. By presidential pardon he was restored to citizenship as were all of his men, including his brother Pierre who had been released from the old calaboose in the rear of the cabildo in time to take part in the historic battle, which as historians will point out was fought after the treaty of peace had been signed.

But Lafitte did not make use of his citizenship, nor did Pierre. With their crews they took their boats and sailed to the island of Campeachy, off the Texas coast, now the city of Galveston, and there set up another smuggling headquarters. However, their ambitions soared beyond mere smuggling. They began to take all the profits. In other words, they hi-jacked the slave ships and after making the slave-ship crews walk the plank they gutted the boats and took the cargo of slaves to their headquarters. This was beyond the pale. Such piracy could not last. So an expedition from the United States stormed the place, Lafittes escaped on a single boat. The buildings, boats and stores at the headquarters were destroyed. Those who did not escape with Lafitte made their way into the interior and joined various Indian tribes, causing the redmen to make forays and raids from time to time on new settlements and wagon trains as they made their way west.

Lafitte rounded out his adventurous career by pursuing piracy to the very end. It is believed that he was the pirate who, capturing a schooner off the Atlantic coast, was captivated by the beauty of one of the passengers — Theodosia Burr, daughter of Aaron Burr, and took her with him on his brig during his remaining seafaring days. At any rate Theodosia was never heard of again, and the last sign of Lafitte was a little pile of oyster shells which covered a shallow grave on an island off the coast of Yucatan, where an English traveler seeing the small mound was told by natives that it was the last resting place of the great pirate and his lady.

This, of course, may be pure romanticism on the part of the English traveler, but whoever heard of an Englishman being romantic!

With the retirement of Lafitte from the environs of New Orleans after the great Jackson victory, control of the illicit slave trade fell into the hands of a great philanthropist — John McDonogh.

McDonogh had come to New Orleans at the age of twenty in the year of 1800 with a shipload of goods from Baltimore as representative of a firm of merchants there. Because of the dead calm which the sailing vessel struck on coming up the river, the young voyageur left the boat and made his way by foot along the shore of the port, where he succeeded in selling the entire cargo several days before the arrival of the boat.

This ingenuity and his other talents for business soon marked him as a great trader and within a few short years we find him a man of wealth and power in the city, residing in luxury in a mansion at Chartres and Toulouse streets, the very corner from which started the disastrous fire of twenty years before, which wiped out three-fourths of the city.

As time passed McDonogh dispensed with all other forms of merchandise and commodities, except slaves. He became the great slave trader, buying and selling shiploads of slaves in a single transaction.

McDonogh was well acquainted with the Lafittes and bought many slaves from the brothers which he in turn sold to the planters. For a shipload of a hundred slaves McDonogh would give the Lafittes a hog-round price of \$100 per slave. These he would take to his plantation across the river. They would work his plantation, raise their own food and his crops, while from time to time he would sell one or more to other planters along the river. His price ranged from \$200 to \$500, and occasionally more for slaves he had trained in various trades, such as carpenters, blacksmiths and masons. A good carpenter slave sometimes brought more than \$1000.

After the Battle of New Orleans and the removal of the Lafittes from Baratavia, McDonogh had free sway and there was a steady increase in the prices for slaves.

His old account books, which he kept quite meticulously and accurately, are still existant and bear out this fact, as likewise old newspaper advertisements of a century ago which announce the fact that John McDonogh had a hundred or more slaves for sale at various prices

and on terms to meet the requirements of the various planters.

When he died McDonogh was the richest man in America, not excepting John Jacob Astor. The great slave trader left his entire wealth to be divided between the cities of New Orleans and Baltimore for the erection of public school buildings. Some thirty-odd school structures have been built in New Orleans out of this fund. There is still a part of this fund left in the city treasury invested in bonds.

For some years before his death he had educated a number of negroes whose pale skins displayed a suspicious origin. He sent these offsprings to Abyssinia, where from time to time they would write letters to him and address him as: "Dear Papa!"

A number of these letters are in private collections.

The Final Triumph

From the time of the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 to the start of the Civil War in 1861, a period of forty-six years, New Orleans enjoyed unprecedented progress and prosperity. The War with Mexico in 1845 added to the city's revenues and population. Troops were concentrated here. There was gaiety, gambling, drinking and wild times. Each day and night was a revel of pleasure. New Orleans became known as the "city care forgot." The preachers declared it was the city God forgot. It grew with such speed that it was not only the largest but the wealthiest city in America.

There were no railroads to compete with the river. The traffic of the entire valley poured its resources down the great Mississippi to its port New Orleans. The levee was dotted with steamboats and flatboats, sailing vessels and ocean steamers from every foreign port. It was the city of destiny, as Bienville and Napoleon had declared, and now it was realizing its destiny. Enthusiastic leaders declared that in a few short years it would surpass London in commercial importance.

Then came the first shot at Sumter, April 12, 1861, fired by General Beauregard, the great Creole of New Orleans.

Four years of war in which the Southern forces let victory from their grasp at the very outset by their rhetorical controversies, rivalries and jealousies.

Then the period of reconstruction, the carpet-baggers, the hoodlum regimes; and the birth of the original Ku Klux Klan, to suppress the rising tide of color with its leopard spots.

Vice and the various elements was in full control. It was the black-and-tan carpetbag legislature that granted a twenty-five year franchise to the Louisiana Lottery in 1868. That day gold, wine, graft and corruption wrote a black page on the state's statutes. Negro legislatures made inebriate and profane speeches, introduced insane measures and insulted the white supremacy of the South.

There followed an unbroken period of hectic history until September 17, 1874, when the negro metropolitan

police were defeated in pitched battle by the citizens army of New Orleans.

That ended the carpetbaggers and their negro henchmen, but not the Louisiana Lottery, the attorneys for which had already seen to it that it was written irrevocably into the law of the state for a quarter of a century.

But it was conducted with such carelessness that the people began to suspect that the drawings were crooked. For a time it looked like this frankenstein of gambling would die of its own weight. But the astute minds who conceived the plan and were reaping millions annually in certain profits figured on a plan to whitewash the scheme from all skepticism.

General Beauregard, impoverished by the war and unable to find a means of livelihood, was induced by the lottery leaders to accept \$10,000 a year to supervise the lottery each month. It was only a few hours work every thirty days and the poor general was on the point of destitution. For the sake of his family he accepted and continued to the day of his death in 1893, which also incidentally was the last year of the lottery's franchise and the end of its operation as a legal institution in the state of Louisiana.

The Spanish-American war, as in all other wars, found New Orleans and its patriotic sons ready to do their patriotic part. Once again the city was benefited by war and its revenues and the metropolis of the South added to its wealth and population until at the turn of the Twentieth Century it boasted of a population totaling more than 300,000, about half of which were white and the other half colored.

So this was the modern New Orleans which found Lulu White operating a large and commodious sporting house, patronized by politicians, race-track gamblers and denizens of the underworld.

From this corner on Basin street the tentacles of political corruption and vice spread to the entire city, for the saloon on the ground floor was the "pay-off" headquarters for all the unlawful and vicious elements, just as it is today.

Today the headquarters is still there, but there is no pay-off. The reason is the young fiery leader named Huey P. Long who made 'em close up.

Although the Lottery was denied a new franchise, the "old ring" still held its control of the city and the same vicious conditions prevailed until 1920, when McShane, an honest Scotchman, heading a reform group was elected mayor. For four years the city had the best government in all its history, then in 1924 the forces of corruption again rose to power and the vicious element took possession of the old vice district which had been closed since the World War. Because the revenues from vice had been cut off for three years, 1917 to 1920, the "old ring" was an easy prey to reform. It had no money to buy votes and finance its election frauds. But, during the intervening four years, they had mustered enough funds, a total of \$365,000, with which they again bought their way back into power by buying up the ward leaders and henchmen and election watchers on election day. This organized group of vicious elements which has its feet in the underworld and its head in corruption crushed everything before it until it became so bold as to openly flaunt opposition in the city. However, in the state a young man threw down the gauntlet to them and in 1928, like David against Goliath, he was elected governor. This was the beginning of the end for the "old ring."

First, they tried to impeach him, but he escaped this by outwitting them with the famous "round robin," which a majority of the state senators signed declaring they would not convict him regardless of the trumped up evidence of the "old ring" master-minds.

Then they organized a high-sounding Constitutional League and raised \$100,000 to investigate and obtain evidence against the young governor. After months of investigating and the fund entirely expended they were unable to find one scintilla of evidence against him nor his acts in office.

Day after day impediments, handicaps and obstructions were placed in his way and for four years he hurtled each one. Then before the expiration of his term as governor he was elected to the United States senate with a large majority. He made the issue a state-wide paving and bridge program totaling \$100,000,000 and financed by a bond issue liquidated by a gasoline tax. It added no taxes to the poor. He won and carried out the program to the letter.

But the "old ring" did not cease fighting him. In the meantime, he gained more and more strength with

the people, especially with his demands for a wider distribution of wealth and his defense of the disabled veterans and soldiers' bonus. As he grew in strength he knew the time had come for the greatest victory of his career — destroying the dragon of vice which poisoned the very air of New Orleans.

After a program of legislation which he guided through the state legislature reducing homestead taxes and cutting other taxes levied against the poor by previous administrations, he suddenly swooped down upon the city of New Orleans and in a radio address warned the vicious elements to close their dives or take the consequences. He then through the governor notified the mayor of the city, the district attorney and the chief of police that if they did not enforce the law and see that the thousand and more dens and brothels stayed closed he would oust them from office and put in a new mayor, a new district attorney and a new chief of police.

This is the present status of the situation in New Orleans. The vicious elements are hog-tied. The people are asking themselves, will they stay closed? The answer is "positively and absolutely." There will be no more vice or vicious element in control of New Orleans. For the first time in two centuries the word "finis" may be written across the history of vice, graft and corruption in New Orleans.

For the next decade, at least, and we hope for several decades, the good people of this fair city will know the meaning of good government, thanks to Huey P. Long!

And what became of Lulu White? She could not stand the monotony of reform. During the four years of the McShane administration she tried travelling. Then on her return she played the races, losing thousands every day. Finally, she lost all her money, then her diamonds, and at last, her property. She died a few years ago and was placed in a pauper's grave. No friend was there to mourn her. All her white lovers were like ghosts of the past. The only monument that remains to Lulu White is the brick two-story brothel she built on Basin street. It is there that the "old ring" now presides. It is there the "ring" bosses meet and split the swag.

It is still pay-off headquarters, but there is no pay-off!

For *Huey P. Long* put an end to the underworld in New Orleans.